About FECCA

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

We provide advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community.

FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism.

FECCA’s membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders.
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Acknowledgements

A number of organisations and authors have produced materials designed to assist people to be effective advocates and leaders. FECCA has adapted these materials and this kit would not have been possible without them. In particular FECCA acknowledges:

- Letitia Bouloukos, 2002, Be Fearless! A guide to getting your voice heard by the community, your government representatives and government departments, Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, Brisbane.

- Commonwealth Department of Health and Community Services, National Mental Health Branch (CDHCS), 1999, The Kit – A guide to the advocacy we choose to do. A resource kit for consumers of mental health services and family carers, CDHCS, Canberra.

FECCA also acknowledges the material adapted from materials produced by Consumer Affairs Victoria. A list of references is at the end of this kit.
As new migrants and humanitarian entrants become established in their community many will want to take on a leadership and advocacy role to better represent the interests of their fellow citizens.

Community advocates are an essential part of our democratic process. Advocates convey community views to government so that decisions can be made that are in the best interests of communities and the nation as a whole. To ensure that the right policy decisions are made, it is important that community advocates are both skilled and representative of their community.

A Community Leadership, Advocacy and Skills Resource Kit such as this is a welcome and much needed guide on how to undertake and manage these activities. It is aimed at people who have had little experience in this field and who may also be unfamiliar with our political and social structures. It contains very useful tips and information on ethical advocacy, establishing a community organisation, communicating and lobbying. It explains how to arrange, participate in, and chair meetings effectively, with practical advice on keeping meetings focused and taking minutes of a meeting. The Kit also covers the importance of building strategic networks. Networking, negotiation and collaboration within and between communities is critical to building community capacity and promoting community harmony.

I commend the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia and the other organisations involved in producing the Community Leadership, Advocacy and Skills Resource Kit. I am confident this resource will be helpful to all Australians with an interest in community leadership and advocacy.
Introduction

Australians come from over 200 different ancestries and speak more than 300 languages. Immigration has been a constant in Australia since European settlement. Issues like settlement, social inclusion, employment, education, English language training, health, housing and discrimination can be very difficult for many migrant and refugee communities. These issues can lead to acute social disadvantage.

The principles of multicultural policy in Australia include access and equity, community harmony and the right to live a life free from racism and discrimination. These are all underpinned by the idea of social justice and more recently by the emerging field of social inclusion. Social justice has three basic principles:

- All people must be guaranteed equal legal and political rights as well as the capacity to exercise those rights
- All people should be able to participate fully in society and have input into decisions which affect their lives
- Economic and social inequality should be reduced so that people who experience disadvantage can participate in society.

The social disadvantage that migrant and refugee communities can face means it is very important they have strong and effective advocates and leaders.

Strong advocates and leaders can help those who make decisions about policies and services better understand the needs of CALD communities. This can help to bring about positive change and social justice.

Advocates and leaders can also ensure that their communities are strong and vibrant.

Advocacy can lead to opportunities for self empowerment and personal fulfilment. It can be personally very rewarding.

Advocacy can also be challenging and difficult. Sometimes you will succeed in what you are trying to do. Sometimes you will not. Advocates and leaders need as much information and support as possible.

There are many ways to make your advocacy and leadership activities more effective. For example: increasing your knowledge about issues, clarifying your attitudes and values and learning new skills and strategies.

This kit aims to provide you with information, skills and strategies to make your advocacy activities as effective as possible.
How to use this resource kit

This resource kit is designed to help advocates become leaders, and for leaders to think more fully about how to undertake advocacy.

While it is primarily for new and emerging communities, or those forming new groups, it contains useful advice, tips and information, even for the most experienced community representatives.

We encourage you to get a feel for the entire kit, before you work through the different sections. At the end of each part there is a list of the things you should have developed an understanding of.

There is also a lot of very useful information on the internet and in other documents. We have included links and references to these throughout the kit.

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Part 1 of the kit talks about advocacy and leadership.

Advocacy often involves challenging systems or organisations that are not willing to change. This part discusses some of the benefits of advocacy. It also explains the Australian political system and provides you with a framework for how to advocate ethically.

Part 2 provides information about how to establish a community organisation.

This part includes tips on how to form a group, the structure of groups and some of the legal issues to consider. It also discusses organisational administration and what makes organisations strong.

Part 3 describes some of the key tools of advocacy and leadership.

These include how to develop a key message and promote it through things like newsletters and the media. Part three also sets out how to lobby politicians and develop a campaign. It contains tips about holding meetings, applying for funding, supporting your community and taking care of yourself.

Part 4 contains resources and links.

There is a list of useful community contacts around Australia and links to key peak bodies. This part also contains links to international human rights instruments.

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We gratefully welcome any feedback you have on this kit. Please contact admin@fecca.org.au with your ideas.
Advocacy and leadership

Part 1 – Advocacy and leadership

This part has information about:
• Advocacy and leadership
• How to advocate ethically
• The Australian political context.

What is advocacy and leadership?
Advocacy means supporting a cause or issue in order to bring about change and help others. You are an advocate when you support a cause or speak in favour of an issue. Advocates do not have to be leaders, but good leaders should be strong advocates.
Issues that people advocate about can be specific to an individual (self advocacy). They can also involve an entire community or a group of people (collective advocacy). Collective advocacy often attempts to influence or change society.
Anyone can be an advocate. You do not need to have any formal qualifications. If you are advocating on behalf of yourself, all you need is personal experience and an understanding of how to get your issues heard.
In order to advocate on behalf of a group or community you need the consent and support of the community or group that you are representing.
For advocacy to be effective, it is important to learn how to identify issues of concern, as well as issues that can prevent your advocacy efforts from being successful.
Change is more likely to occur if individual or community needs are expressed in a clear way to those people or organisations that make decisions (Bouloukos 2002).

Why advocate?
No one knows as much about you and what you think, feel and need as you do. If you do not tell people who have the authority to make decisions about a situation that you are unhappy with, then they will assume everything is all right.
By speaking out you may find that you are not alone. By refusing to be silent, you may lead the way to changes that affect a lot of people. Speaking out is a big step towards keeping your self-respect and dignity, even if you do not get what you want (PAN 1997).
In Australia people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have sometimes been quiet while other more established Australians have advocated on their behalf. This has happened more recently with some refugee communities. This type of advocacy is often well meaning and can lead to good outcomes. But sometimes it can exclude those being advocated about from decisions affecting their lives. FECCA wants to empower all migrant and refugee communities to play a strong role in advocating for their communities.
What can advocacy achieve?

Advocacy is aimed at bringing change or reform. Advocacy challenges services, systems and the broader community to respond genuinely to meet the expressed requirements or needs of people. Effective advocacy will inevitably empower people in their everyday lives.

Advocacy and promoting the needs of your community can:

- Open doors to participation
- Right wrongs
- Change the balance of power
- Address injustice
- Improve services
- Alter attitudes and values.

Finding your own style of advocacy

Try and find your own style of advocacy. What works for one person will not always work for others. Remember, you have a right to have your issues heard.

You do not need to be an expert on every issue. Speak from what you know. You have valuable knowledge and experience. This may include: what it is like to arrive in Australia from another country or grow up in Australia as a young person from an ethnic community. You do not need a university degree to speak about your experiences.

Make sure you respect other people who talk from their own knowledge. Their understanding might be different from your own. You might even believe that other people are wrong. Just as you have a right to have your issues heard, you need to respect the rights of others to have their issues heard, even when you do not agree with them.

There is no particular way to undertake advocacy. It is something that happens every time an individual speaks out in support of his or her own cause or community (Bouloukos 2002).

Being prepared

Taking action to influence the social and political system or being an activist means different things to different people. Each person who works for social, cultural, or political change is an activist.

Advocacy can mean putting yourself in the spotlight. Even when acting with or on behalf of a group, advocacy is still a very personal activity. When things go well you will feel good about the gains that are made. But you may feel disappointed or angry when things do not go well.

Being well prepared and organised is a good way of reducing the risk of being ineffective and of minimising stress. It is also useful to think about your personal resources, recognise personal boundaries, take care of yourself, and work through your motives for being involved.

Being prepared is about getting organised, creating networks and finding people to undertake advocacy activities with you. It is also about developing new skills, increasing your knowledge and being open to new opportunities.

Change can take a long time. This means advocacy often needs to be done one step at a time. You may need to develop a plan of action to help you keep focused on long-term goals (CDHCS 1999).
How is advocacy undertaken?

Each person will have a different reason for engaging in advocacy. Some will want to act at a local, personal level. Others will want to act at a higher level and influence matters of national importance. There are many ways of undertaking advocacy and promoting the needs of your community. Some examples include:

- Participating in community consultation about a decision through satisfaction surveys, suggestion boxes, questionnaires, program evaluations or forums
- Joining advisory or reference groups to offer input from a community perspective
- Holding full membership and voting rights on decision-making bodies
- Forming and operating self-help and peer support groups
- Becoming involved in lobbying and advocacy activities
- Being employed to fill roles such as: consultants on projects, community liaison in agencies and conducting social research
- Advocates may also work with training institutions, including universities, to raise awareness about their community’s needs. They may also be contracted to conduct training workshops with staff of particular services (CDHCS 1999).

Where should advocacy be undertaken?

There is no limit to where advocacy activities can be undertaken. However, many people involved in advocacy believe that it is vital to focus on the big picture or the systems that govern society. This means focusing on things like legislation, policies, administration, organisation, systems, attitudes and professional practices (CDHCS 1999).

If the needs of people from CALD backgrounds are recognised at this level, it is more likely that those needs will be addressed.

Barriers to effective advocacy

There is increased awareness about the importance of advocacy and changes have taken place to enable increased participation. However, large barriers to effective advocacy remain. Barriers can include:

**Lack of credibility** – Service providers and others will continue to judge themselves as experts on the needs of consumers from CALD backgrounds. Individuals may be judged as not accurately representing their community’s concerns even when they have been invited to participate as a ‘community representative’

**Lack of organisation** – Advocacy is more effective when there are many people who feel strongly about the same cause and who are focused on the same goals and activities.

**Resistance to change** – Change is difficult to implement. This is particularly true in larger organisations with a well-developed organisational culture.

**The nature of society** – Information and education will help reduce prejudice. It is important to recognise that there are forces, like the way the media portrays some ethnic or faith groups that will influence community attitudes and reinforce stereotypes.

**Political will** – Advocacy may not produce the desired change because of political factors. Sometimes a good idea is just too challenging at that time or in that situation.

**Sustainability** – Sometimes advocacy activity requires effort over a long period. Energy or interest in a cause may not be sustained for a range of reasons.

**Location** – People living in rural communities have extra challenges in carrying out advocacy because they may be more isolated and have fewer services.
Language and Cultural Barriers – CALD people, particularly recent migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, can face difficulties advocating. This can be due to language barriers and a lack of understanding about how politics, power and policy operate in Australia.

Advocacy is not easy at any level. Some of the challenges described are personal ones and can be assisted by good support structures. Most of the challenges are to do with ‘the system' and often the very things about which change is sought. Remember: the inability to achieve what you want is not your fault (CDHCS 1999).

An ethical framework for advocacy

There is no formal ‘code of ethical conduct’ for advocates and leaders in the community sector. But there are a number of clear principles about what are decent and proper ways to work as a community advocate, leader, or as a representative organisation.

Since advocacy often focuses on justice and equity, advocacy activities are strongly influenced by an understanding of what makes up ethical behaviour. Advocacy is about all members of the community being empowered and valued as equal citizens.

Deciding what to do and how

Before you advocate on behalf of others you should have a clear understanding of what your community thinks the issues of concern are, as well as the actions that will best address them.

Consultation and meetings with your community will enable you to decide as a group what the main issues are and how to respond to them in a planned way. This process will also enable members of your community to have a say and become involved in the process of change. This is a great way to empower people.

There may be different views in your community. It is important to acknowledge this. The challenge in advocacy is to maintain a strong sense of the views of the majority of people within your community. You also need to respect and be sensitive to other people who may have a different point of view to you.

Confidentiality

If you are advocating on behalf of someone else, it is vital that you are aware of issues concerning confidentiality. Confidentiality is about having control over who has access to information about people and in what form.

There are many issues about confidentiality that are not as simple or obvious as they appear. Some of the basic issues to consider include:

- What consumers of services mean by confidentiality can be quite different to what service providers mean
- Confidentiality means that information is not discussed with others
- Confidentiality means you do not identify a person to a third party (or parties) without that person’s permission
- Confidentiality means that you do not discuss another person’s affairs where you could be overheard by those not directly concerned
- Confidentiality means treating any information you have about another person with respect for their privacy – do not discuss a person’s information with others without that person’s permission (CDHCS 1999).
Accountability and responsibility

Being accountable means that you need to be able to justify your words and actions. In some cases you may be required to be formally accountable to an employer, funding body, group, or person (for such things as reports or invoices). In other cases, accountability may mean taking responsibility for your role in a less formal or structured way.

You may find yourself in a situation where you are accountable to more than one person or group and there is a conflict.

First, consider your own conscience and whether you believe that your actions are morally right. Second, consider how your actions may be interpreted in the worst possible way by an objective onlooker. Make sure that your actions cannot be interpreted as foolish or self-interested and that they can be defended (CDHCS 1999).

Representing your community – your role on committees

Advocacy can sometimes involve representing a group or a cause, for example, when acting as a community representative on a committee of management.

It is important to be clear about the intent or purpose of representation. You may be being asked to represent your own views as an individual, the views of your community, or of an organisation you are associated with.

If a community leader or advocate is going to represent the views of their community, it is important that they fully understand the opinions, views and perceptions of their community (CDHCS 1999).

Appointees

Sometimes community leaders are asked to sit on special advisory committees because they are well known or have particular expertise or experience. These people are in a position of great responsibility as community leaders. A lot of what they are asked to discuss will be confidential and they will not be able to share it with others.

They are often selected because they come from an organisation that has access to a network of people or organisations in their community. Although they are not representative (in the usual sense), a part of their responsibility is to think about how they frame the information and advice they put forward within the committee.

Tokenism

Tokenism is the inclusion of a representative from a socially marginalised group into a mainstream body to satisfy anti discrimination legislation or to take advantage of targeted funding opportunities.

Community representatives can be included in a token way as researchers or as members of advisory and evaluation boards or during consultation. Where this occurs there may not be a genuine attempt to listen and learn how to respond better to the expressed needs of CALD communities.

You can try to address tokenism by:

- Seeking to have at least two (preferably more) community representatives present to avoid being the lone voice when decisions are made
- Ensuring that clear and understandable information relevant to your community’s concerns is available to all participants to assist with decision-making
- Seeking to ensure that the perspectives of CALD communities are fully integrated into training programs. Community representatives should be included during the planning stages of programs in which they are to participate (CDHCS 1999).
The Australian political system

Advocacy involves understanding the Australian political system. In Australia we elect people to represent our views and interests to parliament. This system of government is called a representative democracy. Citizens are free to vote for whoever they choose.

Australian governments must follow the rules found in our federal and state constitutions. Citizens must obey the laws or rules that are made by the people we elect to represent us. These laws are upheld by our courts.

In Australia, citizens have a number of rights. These include the right to a fair trial if you are accused of breaking the law and the right to free speech.

Federalism – two levels of government

The Australian Constitution is the primary law of Australia. It sets out the responsibilities of our state and commonwealth parliaments. Government tasks are shared between two levels of government – the states and the commonwealth. This is called federalism.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for things like immigration, foreign affairs, trade and defence. State governments are responsible for things like health, emergency services and police.

Under the Constitution, the Queen of the United Kingdom is our head of state. In practice the Prime Minister is the leader of the Commonwealth Government. The Prime Minister and his ministers run the Commonwealth Government (ECCV 2007).

The states establish local government

Local governments are not recognised in the Australian Constitution but are established and regulated by state parliaments and laws. Local government has responsibility for things like: local area planning and land use management, local area traffic control, welfare services and household garbage disposal.

Separation of powers

In Australia, there is a separation of powers between the head of state, the government, and the courts, which helps protect our rights. In Australia religion is also separated from our government and legal systems.

There are three branches of government: the parliament, the executive and the judiciary.

Parliament

The parliament makes the laws (or legislation) and scrutinises the actions of government.

The commonwealth parliament has two houses: an upper house called the Senate and a lower house called the House of Representatives.

Most states have both an upper and a lower house. Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have only one house of parliament.

The government is the group that wins a majority of seats in the lower house in an election. Since World War Two, Commonwealth Governments have been formed by either of the two main political parties: the Australian Labor Party or the Liberal/National parties in coalition.

The opposition is the party or group that holds the second largest number of seats in parliament. There may also be members of parliament who are not aligned to either the government or the opposition.
The Executive
The executive (also called ‘the government’) is responsible for implementing the laws made by parliament. All the ministers in the governing party are formally part of the executive. Most policies and laws are initiated by the executive through Cabinet. Cabinet is made up of senior government ministers including the prime minister or premier.

The public service
The public service is the administrative arm of the government. It has many different departments, for example, housing. Sometimes it is called the ‘bureaucracy’.

The Judiciary
The third branch of government in Australia is the judiciary or judges and courts. The Constitution established a federal court system, including the High Court of Australia. The High Court may hear appeals from state and federal courts and it is also responsible for interpreting the Australian Constitution (PIAC, 2003: 8).

Dealing with the bureaucracy
Bureaucracy is a way of organising. Bureaucracy can also refer to the large government departments that organise and implement policies.
Large and complex organisations, such as government departments, tend to adopt a ‘bureaucratic’ approach to manage their workloads. It involves a lot of structure and many organisational levels.
There are certain rules governing the way things can and cannot be done and there are particular ways of communicating.
For advocacy to have an impact it must acknowledge the structure of bureaucracy and address it accordingly. Despite a desire for things to be different, community representatives and advocates:
- Need to expect that response time to advocacy approaches will be slow
- Need to give plenty of notice, say, for a meeting
- May have to deal with a lower level worker who is unable to make the appropriate decision before they can deal with the right person (CDHCS 1999).

Dealing with politics
Politics is about power. As advocacy involves trying to change inequality brought about by power imbalances, dealing with politics is inevitable. It is useful to know that negotiating the balance of power will occur in any advocacy activity. Either you or somebody else will be seeking to increase their power.
At a formal level politics is also what governments engage in. It is about ensuring that structures are in place to represent the will of the people. In Australia political representatives are elected on the basis of what they stand for and the extent to which this is supported by the community. Your community’s concerns or vision for change may be different to the policy of the political party in power.
Politics can also play a big role in community organisations. Some individuals who are working in your organisation may have different views or goals to you. This can create tension as different people try to get different outcomes. Often this ‘politics’ is a matter of differing opinion. Try to recognise this difference and respect and work with it (CDHCS 1999).

Learnings
You should now have an understanding of:
- Advocacy and leadership
- How to advocate ethically
- The Australian political context.
Part 2 – Establishing a community organisation

This part has information about:

- How to establish a community organisation
- Governance issues and legal obligations for community organisations
- Organisational administration including developing and managing a budget
- What makes an organisation strong.

Group advocacy

Many people carry out advocacy activities as part of a group. Group advocacy is conducted by people who get together to represent, challenge or campaign on issues which affect other individuals or groups of people.

There are many ways to start a group. One typical way is described below. The process is based on the principles of social justice and empowering group members.

If you have already started a group, but need more information on where to go from here, or to better manage your organisation, this part of the kit will give you some useful tips.

The birth of a group

Groups can come together in a number of ways. People interested in a certain cause may start meeting together to discuss what action they can take. Other people are invited to join over time and a group comes into existence. In these early stages it is a good idea to pay attention to issues that may impact on the group in the future.

One of these is how ‘representative’ the group can be. This refers to the group’s ability to represent those whom it claims to represent (if it claims to represent anyone). Groups do not have to claim to represent anyone else. However, a group that conducts advocacy and/or community development can be challenged to demonstrate how it can speak on behalf of other community members.

Consultation with the community is the key. If a group consists of 10 like minded people who have never consulted with their broader community, it may have difficulty demonstrating it is ‘representative’. As a result the group may not have much credibility.

Representation is an issue that goes to the heart of a community organisation that aims to undertake advocacy work. However, no matter how hard a group tries it can never claim to be truly representative because there is always a wide diversity of opinions. Despite this, advocacy groups should try to be as representative as possible (CDHCS 1999).
Process for forming an organisation

Hold an initial meeting of several people interested in starting a group.
Consult with existing organisations for advice and assistance.
Obtain support to enable a forum to be held, notifying community members who may be interested in attending.
Hold a forum with clear objectives: determine the purpose of the group; have a registration form for participants to fill out; notify participants where and when the next meeting will be held.
Focus on group development at initial meetings. Develop a mission statement on how the group is to operate; develop a set of guiding principles for the group; develop a strategic plan to achieve the mission statement; decide who will do what; decide membership issues.
Do not undertake advocacy until the group has developed a sound structure.
Start advocacy with one relatively straightforward issue; one that has a good chance of being successful.
Work on only one issue at a time. See this issue right through to its conclusion before commencing work on another issue.
Don’t be distracted from pursuing the issue.
Maintain 'passion' – encourage the group.
Network with other groups–enlist their support where appropriate.
Ensure that all members of the group are involved to the fullest extent in both the development of the group and in the advocacy work being undertaken.
Consider the social needs of the group – have some fun sometimes.
Celebrate success and victories, no matter how small.
Keep recruiting members. (CDHCS 1999)

The structure of the group

Apart from the actual advocacy issues that the group is involved in, attention must be paid to the group itself. To be effective, an organisation must have a clear structure and good processes. These things will also help your group to make decisions about its work.
Many groups hold regular formal meetings to make decisions. The formal structure of meetings can help everyone ‘have their say’ about the direction of the group. There are tips on how to run meetings in part 3 of this kit.
It may take time to get the structure of your group right, but it will help to ensure your group is long lasting.
Community organisations often have office bearers such as a President, Secretary and Treasurer. While this may seem formal, groups that use formal structures are more likely to survive than those that do not. In deciding its structure, your group may wish to think about its aims, funding and activities.
Office bearers will lead the organisation and it is important that they have time and the right skills to do this. For example, the President should have some experience in chairing meetings or be able to develop those skills. Meetings are an important way to involve members and make decisions. The President may also need to act as a spokesperson for the group.
A Secretary should know how to provide notice of meetings and to take the minutes of meetings and be able to produce the minutes in a timely way. A Secretary also needs to be organised as they will manage the contact list of members of the group. A Treasurer should have some experience in financial matters.

Many of these skills can be learned, but office bearers need to be responsive and accountable to the group and also committed to leading it.

Your group may also wish to think about whether to incorporate. This decision has important legal consequences, particularly for people who are going to be on the board or committee of management of a not-for-profit group.

**Incorporation**

Incorporation is similar to establishing a company to run a business. Incorporation is not recommended to groups that have recently been formed. It is usually done by organisations that have survived the early stages of group development and have achieved relative stability. Some organisations may never feel the need to incorporate.

Incorporation creates a 'legal entity'. This means the incorporated body takes on a life of its own and is governed by state and territory incorporated association laws. Smaller, not-for-profit organisations often use this structure. Larger, more profit driven organisations may incorporate under the Commonwealth Corporations Law.

Incorporation may be desirable for organisations seeking grants for particular projects, ongoing funding or to maintain a social club that involves the handling of member fees or large sums of money.

An incorporated association is required to maintain accurate financial records and to provide an annual financial statement. Many funding bodies require financial statements to be independently audited. Annual returns must be lodged with the state or territory lodgement authority. These usually include an annual report, an audited financial statement, certification of an annual general meeting, a statement of any resolutions passed at the annual general meeting and any prescribed fees (CDHCS 1999).

**Some of the advantages of incorporation include:**

- The organisation may be more eligible for grants
- Members and office holders are better protected from personal liability relating to the activities of the organisation
- The organisation can sue and be sued as well as buy and sell property
- The organisation can borrow money.

**Some of the disadvantages of becoming incorporated include:**

- Becoming incorporated involves expense, time and effort
- The organisation must meet ongoing statutory obligations such as holding annual general meetings and producing annual financial reports and there may be penalties for innocent breaches of the law
- If circumstances change, the organisation cannot easily change its structure (CAV 2008).

**A management committee is required for an incorporated association. Such a committee has certain legal duties including:**

- Fiduciary duties – which include to act in the best interests of the organisation and to act in good faith
- Duties of skill and care – which means to act with reasonable skill and care
• Incorporation regulatory requirements – to act according to the requirements set out in the governing legislation and the constitution; these usually include providing annual reports and financial audits if you are a certain size, having annual general meetings, and avoiding financial conflicts of interest
• General regulatory requirements – to act in accordance with all other relevant laws (CDHSH 1994).

For more information on different formal organisational structures see for example:

www.ato.gov.au
www.business.qld.gov.au
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au

**Governance**

Whether or not you decide to incorporate you need to consider the governance of your organisation. Governance is about how your organisation is managed. Governance sets out guidelines for decision-making and outlines responsibilities. It can include things like a Code of Conduct for members or employees.

Corporate governance has become very important following financial upheavals in the corporate world. Community organisations should adopt best practice corporate governance principles to ensure they are operating effectively, particularly if they receive taxpayers’ or public money.

There is no one perfect model for governance. But your model should combine:

1. **Best Practice Guidelines**

   Professional guidelines and rules about: how people in your organisation make decisions and interact with each other; how your organisation manages finance and risk; and how your organisation promotes accountability to its members.

2. **Inclusiveness**

   Everyone in the organisation who has an interest in a decision, or information about the topic, should be able to be heard.

3. **Implementation**

   Once a decision is made it must be fully implemented across the organisation.

4. **Clarity**

   The system should be flexible, and simple. It should be clear who is responsible for what, and how that responsibility relates to the organisation’s goals (Our Community 1991).

Meeting your legal obligations

Organisations have a variety of legal obligations. These can include: incorporated association taxation laws, industrial laws such as minimum labour standards and workcover insurance, fundraising laws, food safety laws and many other areas. Some of the key legal obligations are discussed below.
Tax

Community organisations must comply with commonwealth and state tax laws. Your group may need to pay tax on things like the income that the organisation receives, and GST on goods and services supplied, or payroll tax for staff.

Some community organisations can receive exemptions, concessions or rebates in relation to certain taxes. An exemption means the organisation does not have to pay the tax. A concession means the organisation pays a reduced amount of tax. A rebate means an organisation can claim back some tax paid (PILCH 2008). Many small not-for-profits are income tax (but not GST) exempt. For more information see: www.ato.gov.au

If you are paying GST or other taxes you will need to have good financial records. You may also need to think about getting somebody with bookkeeping skills on a volunteer or paid basis. You could consider buying a software tool to help you keep records and manage your finances.

Staff

If your organisation employs staff, there are a number of legal obligations you must meet. These include complying with relevant awards and/or federal minimum labour standards, paying superannuation, paying workers’ compensation insurance in case your employee is injured, and ensuring you provide a safe and healthy workplace. Many organisations also develop anti-discrimination and anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies.

Many state government websites contain helpful information about these obligations. They also contain information about recruiting and retaining staff.

For example see: www.business.vic.gov.au.

Occupational Health and Safety

Each state and territory has occupational health and safety (OHS) laws that require employers and others to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

OHS obligations can apply to a range of community organisations, including those that are completely volunteer-based. It is important that your organisation complies with its OHS obligations. The following websites provide information about OHS obligations in each state and territory.

ACT: www.workcover.act.gov.au
NSW: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au
NT: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
QLD: www.workcoverqld.com.au
SA: www.workcover.com
TAS: www.workcover.tas.gov.au
VIC: www.workcover.vic.gov.au
WA: www.workcover.wa.gov.au
Organisational administration

Developing good processes
A group is no different from a business. It needs efficient and effective processes for everything from recruiting new members (or staff) to making sure that financial records are properly maintained. All these processes need to work well together. While this may seem time consuming and formal, good processes help your organisation to function and can reduce headaches in the long run (CDHCS 1999).

Policies
Policies are the way that things get done within the group. For example, one of the group’s policies may be: ‘we will discuss the needs of any person who requests assistance. We may not take up the request, but we will suggest the best course for action’.

Procedures
Procedures are the specific things the group does to fulfil the policy. For example, the procedure for handling requests for advocacy may begin with a discussion between the person requesting advocacy and a member (or members) of the group. This procedure may be followed by a written request for advocacy being filled out and signed by both parties. Written requests are then filed away for safe-keeping and as a record.

Controls
Controls help the group to check whether what is meant to be happening is actually happening. Controls are a way to make sure situations that could damage the organisation are prevented. An example of a control is to ensure that the cheque account for the group requires two signatures on all cheques written (CDHCS 1999).

For examples of policy and procedure templates see the policy bank at: www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleId=1453.

Learn from others
It is common to see groups and small organisations ignore what others are doing, or what they have done in the past. Contact a range of similar groups and organisations and ask about their administration practices. The chances are that, from all of these, you can come up with basic practices to modify and build on over time (CDHCS 1999).

Developing and managing a budget
If your organisation receives formal funding, you must ensure the funds are properly used. Managing a budget means planning the way you spend money so that expenditure does not exceed the amount of money you have. The budget of each organisation will be different.

The worksheet below is typical of an organisational budget and includes standard income and expense items. To develop a budget you need to estimate the figures that will be in each category.

Budgets estimate what it will cost to deliver the project or services the group has been funded to deliver. You may also need to purchase equipment.

Draw on all the available information you have about your past income and expenses. You will need to make the best guess possible. Staff costs will probably be a major part of the budget. Staff costs include salary, tax, on-costs like leave loadings, workcover and superannuation.

If you know when particular expenses usually occur or when you will receive funding, try and include that in the monthly budget so it is as accurate as possible.
Once you have filled in the spreadsheet you can subtract the expenses from the income. If you have more income than expenses, go back and check the figures. Do they seem right? You may have money to do extra projects and activities during the year. Or you may be able to put some money aside for future years.

If you have more expenses than income look at everything again. Is there any way to increase your income? Are there things you can drop? Can you run at a deficit?

During the year, you need to monitor your budget against what you spend. A budget does not tell you what expenses you have committed to over time that are not yet spent. Consider this when you are monitoring your budget (Our Community 2001).

**Organisational budget – example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Annual Income</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Annual Income</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Annual Expenses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers and Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and Postage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages and Salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Annual Expenses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Net Surplus/Deficit (equals total annual income less total annual expenses)**
**Strong organisations**

Organisations that thrive make sure they have a sound structure and good processes. They also understand their own development. This can take time and effort. Successful organisations devote all of their formation period to establishing their structure.

Strong organisations also tend to take a proactive stance towards issues (that is, putting forward ideas) rather than only reacting. But organisations need to be flexible. They need to know when to be reactive and when to be proactive.

Above all, to be successful, organisations need to focus on achieving outcomes in a manner that reflects the shared purpose and direction of all group members.

**Group development**

All groups go through stages of development. They usually move from an initial stage of being dependent on their leader, to a stage of 'independence' where the group is self managing. In other words, if the leader leaves there are several people capable of taking on that role.

There are particular challenges that must be faced at each stage. If problems are not solved, the group is at risk of collapsing. Guidance, training and help from others outside the group can all assist with moving through the necessary growth stages.

**Stages of group development**

Some of the stages that groups often go through include:

- Groups that have just started are at the stage of resolving the types of conflicts that arise within any new group; these can include: eligibility for membership; building up membership numbers; getting members to participate in discussions; trying to agree on common goals and ways to achieve the goals
- Groups that have reached the 'norming and storming' stage when there are often conflicts over power and control
- Groups that have existed for several years and want to restructure in order to improve their effectiveness
- Groups that are working well with members who are empowered
- Groups that have existed for a long time and where long-term or foundation members are reluctant to step aside and allow new members to take on the leadership role (CDHCS 1999).

**Business planning**

Groups and organisations are not unlike businesses in that, to be successful in the long term, they need to plan. A business plan is a map for the future of the group that can fulfil several functions. It can:

- Motivate and focus the group
- Ensure all members agree on direction
- Enable all members to know the part they play
- Satisfy the requirements of potential funding bodies.

There are many different ways of writing a business plan. Choose a way that works for your group so that everyone fully understands the plan. The plan needs to look ahead at least three years. It should cover:

- The kind of work or services performed by the group (for example, advocacy, promoting access and equity for people from CALD backgrounds)
- What the group intends to achieve or its mission
- Overall assumptions and strategies of the group
• Information on who or what the group needs to target (for example, health services, government departments, housing support services, employment services)

• How the group will operate financially.

When the plan is being written, think about who will read it (group members, funding agencies), what they need to know, and the main message. Some tips in preparing a business plan include:

• Keep it simple – only include what the reader of the plan needs to know

• Keep it clear – get feedback from someone who does not know much about the group’s activities

• Deal in facts only

• Be positive

• Order the information in the plan under relevant headings

• Use diagrams, drawings, tables whatever members feel are useful

• Use lists of points (CDHCS 1999).

Conflict resolution

Conflict can occur within all committees, groups and organisations. It is useful to have a process in place to handle conflicts and complaints. These are sometimes referred to as 'grievance procedures' or 'complaints procedures'.

It is important to remember that conflict within a group is not necessarily bad. When managed well, conflict can lead to high quality group decisions and a better functioning group. If it is not handled well, conflict can demoralise members and stop the group from achieving its goals.

Group leaders need to be able to diagnose different types of conflict, and to develop skills in resolving conflict. Formal codes of conduct approved by the group can be good tools for managing conflict and setting rules about behaviour.

Grievance procedures

Some suggestions for standard grievance procedure steps include:

• Attempt to resolve the grievance with the person directly

• Document all grievances raised, even if they are resolved informally

• Inform the committee/group as soon as a grievance is made

• If the person has been unable to resolve the issue informally, the grievance should be put in writing to the committee/group

• The committee/group acknowledges the grievance in writing within one week of receiving it and sets up a meeting with the parties involved to attempt to resolve the grievance

• One month after receipt of the grievance in writing, all steps should be completed

• If the grievance is unable to be resolved within the group, other mechanisms for resolving the grievance must be pursued. An example of another mechanism is to ask someone with mediation skills from outside of the group, and unknown to members, to mediate (CDHCS 1999).

Reflection and evaluation

If your organisation is going to remain focused on advocacy, it is important that it regularly reflects on its work. Evaluation asks questions about how well your organisation is responding to the challenges of meeting community needs. The key skill used in evaluation is reflection.

Reflection is not about deep soul searching or blame. Reflection enables the elements of an activity to be broken down and seen for what they are.
Every advocacy activity will be successful in some sense. You may not have achieved exactly what you wanted. Instead you may have altered an attitude or introduced a new idea. This is the first step towards long-term change.

A key way to evaluate is to obtain feedback. This can be done by asking members of your group or community to complete a survey, or by holding a workshop or forum to get feedback face to face. Be clear about the information you want and how you will use it to improve the group’s work. You can use the feedback to help understand what worked and what did not work. This will also help you to plan future activities (CDHCS 1999).

**Understanding change**

All advocacy activity causes people to confront change. People advocate for things to be different from the way they currently are, or to maintain things as they are in the face of pressure for them to be different (CDHCS 1999).

If you are advocating for change, it will be helpful to develop an understanding of common ways that people deal with change. This may help you to decide what strategies to use to bring about change.

Even when faced with the strongest reasons for change, people and organisations tend to demonstrate similar responses. People often actively resist change, arguing strongly for things to remain the same. Change creates anxiety, uncertainty and stress.

If you are introducing change it is important to plan well and communicate clearly and regularly about the change with those who will be affected by it. Leaders need to communicate that resistance is anticipated but that things need to move on (Carnall 1991).

If you are implementing change in your organisation, you can assist people to work through change by recognising their feelings and providing them with opportunities to engage in the process. These include:

- Access to information that is clear and well understood
- Having the opportunity to develop new skills
- Gaining support and encouragement
- Gaining understanding and empathy
- Having valued skills recognised
- Being encouraged to see future benefits
- Not being over organised so that innovation can be encouraged
- Constant and consistent communication
- Being provided with feedback
- Being rewarded and involved at an early stage (Gray and Dunn 1997).

**Learnings**

You should now have an understanding of:

- How to establish a community organisation
- Some of the governance issues and legal obligations for community organisations
- Organisational administration including developing and managing a budget
- What makes organisations strong.
Tools for advocacy and leadership

Part 3 – Tools for advocacy and leadership

This part has information about how to:

- Communicate effectively
- Promote your message, including developing a newsletter and working with the media
- Run meetings and develop a campaign
- Influence people and lobby politicians
- Gain funding
- Develop strategic networks
- Keep your community together and look after yourself.

Communicating effectively

For advocates, good communication is a key skill. The following are some tips on how to prepare a message and communicate it effectively (CDHCS 1999).

Preparing your message

When you are preparing your message, make sure you are clear who you are speaking for. If you are speaking for yourself, the preparation of your message is under your own control. But if you mention other people you need to have their permission. If you are speaking on behalf of a group or for another person, this involves discussion and negotiation with the group beforehand. In either case make sure that you let the audience know what perspective you are coming from.

What is your message? Make sure you have a clear idea of what you wish to say. This may seem basic, but any confusion on your part will translate into confusion for the audience.

Who is your audience? How you pitch your message depends on who you are addressing. For example, a presentation to a class of fourteen year olds about discrimination experienced by members of your community will be different to a discussion with a newspaper reporter.

What is the purpose of your message? Do you wish to persuade, to provoke, to convey simple facts, to ask for opinions, to gain support, or something else?

Getting your message across

Decide what method of delivery is most appropriate for you, for the nature of the message and for the audience. For example, a letter, a written submission of some kind, a formal spoken presentation, an informal discussion with one or more people, an interactive workshop, a petition, a demonstration. Different methods require different skills on the part of the presenter or organiser.

If you use terms that may be unfamiliar to the audience, explain their meaning briefly and simply.

If you are giving a talk, it may be useful to use diagrams, cartoons or headings to illustrate or simplify your main points. Overhead transparencies are quite simple to prepare and use.
If you are writing a letter or making a written submission, try and have it typed rather than handwritten. If you do write by hand, it needs to be as neat and clear as possible.

Invite questions and feedback from your audience (even if this means follow-up letters and phone calls). This way you can clarify your message and correct any misunderstanding.

Even when dealing with a sympathetic or responsive audience include some positive things, especially if the overall message is one of complaint or criticism. For example, if you are complaining about a problem with a service, then include some constructive suggestions about how that service could be improved.

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**Public speaking—some helpful tips**

Make sure you prepare your presentation in plenty of time before the actual event. Last minute preparation will not help your confidence or the clarity of your message.

**Choosing a title:** Try to come up with a title people will remember.

**Practising your presentation:** Practising your presentation will help you to feel comfortable when you have to present it. Time these practice sessions. It is important not to go over time in delivering a speech.

**Using notes:** You can use key point cards or a written speech. Try not to read your entire speech directly from notes. An important way to get your message across is to speak to your audience as directly as possible. You can’t do this with your head down reading. Your voice will also carry better if your head is up, facing the audience.

**Relating to the audience:** The best way to reach the people in your audience is to look at them. Make eye contact with one or two people in different parts of the room. If you can't make eye contact, look over the heads of the audience (not too high) to the back of the room.

**Using a microphone:** In a small venue you will not need a microphone, but in a large room it may be necessary. Try to practice speaking into a microphone if you have not done it before. Remember don’t put your mouth too close. Speak into the top of the microphone.

**Using equipment:** If you are using video, slides or overheads, make sure that the equipment is ready before you start and that you know how it works.

**Delivering your presentation:** Do not rush. Talking too fast will make you difficult to understand. Change the tone of your voice to emphasise different points in the speech.

**Finding a place for your notes:** If you use notes, it can be helpful to have a stand of some kind to rest them on so you don’t have to hold them.

**Using hand movements:** Some people wave their hands around when they are talking. It can be very distracting for the audience, so try not to do it. You can use your hands to emphasise important points.

**Inviting questions from the audience:** If you wish to invite questions from the audience after your talk, then you must allow time for this.

**Always have a glass of water handy.** Nervousness can give you a very dry mouth (CDHCS 1999).
Getting people to understand you

A good way to make sure people understand you is to discuss issues with your audience, rather than just presenting information to them. In workshops and informal group sessions any misunderstanding can be addressed straight away as people can question you directly.

Whatever your message and however you choose to present it, try to emphasise the most important points. In a spoken presentation you can summarise these points at the beginning and at the end of your talk or use overheads or slides. In written presentations summaries of the main points are also important (CDHCS 1999).

Different people learn in different ways. If you have three main points, it is a good idea to make them in several different ways. Some examples of different teaching methods are:

- Clearly state the main points and write them on an overhead, chalkboard, whiteboard or slides
- Tell a short story or anecdote which highlights one or more of the main points. You might decide to use humour in this form of storytelling
- Use a powerful quotation. Write it on the whiteboard for audience members to see when they enter the room. They will often sit there trying to work out the significance of such a quote while waiting for you to start
- Ask questions which encourage the audience to think about their own attitudes and values – be careful not to overuse this particular tactic.

As mentioned above, some individuals find it a great deal easier to understand and remember information if it is presented visually. Showing a film or using posters, photos or slides may be suitable for some types of presentation (Arnold R 1991).

Using stories

People's stories help bring issues to life. Stories can be very effective in promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of concerns.

The most difficult aspect of telling your own story in public is that it is about yourself. It might be painful to remember particular events. First, decide whether you can share your emotions and your experiences with your audience. Write down your story. This will help you to decide how much of yourself you want to make public and the areas you do not want to discuss.

You may feel too vulnerable telling your story in the first person (using the words ‘I’/‘me’). You can choose to tell it in the third person (using ‘he’/‘she’). This can reduce the emotional strain attached to personal storytelling. You can decide whether or not to tell the audience this is what you are doing.

Believe in the value of your story as a way of getting your message across. This happened to you and you are the expert about your own experiences.

You may also need an activity to bring your listeners into the story so that they think about their own behaviours and attitudes in relation to it (CDHCS 1999).
Promoting your message

Engaging with the broader community and promoting your message is essential to the success of advocacy work. The more allies you create, the more likely it is they will be supportive of your cause and willing to work with you to bring about change.

Promotion can be carried out in a range of ways. These include, establishing a newsletter; having a website on the internet; getting published; producing and distributing brochures, flyers and posters; submitting articles to newspapers; using the media; holding public forums; hosting social events; speaking at meetings of other groups; submitting to government policy reviews and to government committees; and speaking at conferences. In this section we focus on a few key ways to promote your message (CDHCS 1999).

Developing a newsletter or magazine

Newsletters are an essential way for groups and organisations to broadly communicate the activities they are engaged in. Newsletters can vary a great deal. Before you start a newsletter think about:

- The amount of funding available – this will affect what can be produced
- The number of people and amount of time available to prepare a newsletter – producing a newsletter takes time and effort so you need people who are committed. You may need to find people outside the group to write articles
- The title of the newsletter – this should be decided by all members and reflect the purpose and identity of the group
- The overall appearance of the newsletter – choose clear, easy to read fonts in a size that does not require detailed inspection; the newsletter should display information in a way that makes it easy and enjoyable to read
- The content and layout of the newsletter – try and aim for consistency in layout and the kind of content you include; the newsletter could have regular features, such as an editorial, letters to the editor, calendar of events, work in progress, future activities.
- Who will receive it and how often – this may depend on your resources. Generally, non-profit community groups produce newsletters either monthly or quarterly. It is difficult to maintain a regular readership if a newsletter is produced less than four times a year (CDHCS 1999).

Targeting the newsletter to an audience

Newsletters need to target different audiences. If your group is new, the main audience will be potential members. Over time other readers may include: group members, potential members, members of other groups, potential financial sponsors, allied community organisations, service providers, targets of advocacy, politicians and bureaucrats.

The newsletter should be written in such a way that people can easily understand it and be supportive of the group and its work. The purpose of a newsletter is to obtain supporters, not alienate people and groups. Avoid strong opinions.

Newsletters should not contain private or confidential material. Editors must be very careful that potentially defamatory material is not printed. Defamatory material includes damaging comments or words about individuals that are untrue. There can be substantial financial penalties for you or your organisation if you defame people. Take care not to write untrue statements or make untrue comments in your newsletter.
Distributing the newsletter

The first step in distributing the newsletter is creating a mailing list of group members and the various audiences that the group wishes to target. A new group may borrow a mailing list from another group that is carrying out similar activities, or use a resource directory to compile its own. In order to save postage costs and ensure that you do not have a lot of newsletters returned to you, it is worth contacting people on your distribution list to make sure that their address details are correct.

Many organisations send their newsletters in electronic format via email. This saves on printing and postage costs.

You can also hand deliver copies of the newsletter to places where target audiences can pick up a copy, such as: other community organisations, community centres, neighbourhood centres. Always seek permission before leaving newsletters at these locations.

Newsletters can also be sent out to people or organisations that the group is lobbying as a way of informing them of the group's activities (CDHCS 1999).

Working with the media

The community relies on the media to provide information on what is happening locally, throughout the country and in the world. There are many ways the media can positively influence the community's attitude towards our multicultural society and particular issues of concern to CALD communities.

Being able to work with the media effectively is essential in undertaking advocacy and community development. The media is a powerful tool. It is important to use the media strategically and not get misrepresented in the process.

Developing a media plan

By developing a media plan you will be prepared when a situation or opportunity for media arises. The group must consider what messages it wants to send to the community as well as to target groups or organisations. By repeating these messages through various avenues (for example local newspapers, local current affairs shows, community radio), awareness of your group and the issues you are concerned about will increase.

The messages should be easy for reporters and editors to use and also influence the audience. You may want to think about whether the message is for the whole community or part of it. If it is for a particular audience, you may decide that a particular type of media is more suitable than others. For example use: local papers for local issues, women's magazines for issues relating to women, the Sunday paper for a feature article, television for on the spot news.

Your media plan also needs to provide guidelines on the rights of privacy and confidentiality for any member of your community who might wish to remain anonymous.
Contacting the media

Compile a list of media outlets, detailing the names of individuals and their organisations. Update this list regularly to ensure a complete and current list of reporters and media outlets to call on when the opportunity or necessity for media exposure arises.

You may find that some media outlets have specific people assigned to cover particular areas, such as health or community issues. You may also find that some of these people support your causes. These relationships can be extremely valuable at times when you most need assistance.

One way of compiling a media list is to ring the various newspapers, television and radio stations and request the names and phone numbers of the reporters likely to cover the issues that affect your group. Also check your local newspapers for the issues that particular reporters have responsibility for.

Making contact with the media can be achieved in several ways. You can fax information. Faxes indicate a sense of urgency because they are immediate. You can also mail information packages about your group and its activities. The package can include a covering letter from a group representative with details on how representatives of the group can be contacted.

Another way of making contact with the media is to ring them up, state your business and offer to meet with them to discuss the activities of your group. If they are too busy to meet with you, offer to mail them an information pack following the conversation. Remember to thank them for their time (CDHCS 1999).

Establishing the group's credibility

To establish the group as a resource that the media can use, the group must be a credible source of information and comment. The following tips can help:

- Always provide honest information
- Never speak as 'an individual' if you are representing the group (for example, do not say, 'this is the group's position, however, personally I believe ...')
- Although it can be difficult, always try to substantiate your comments, providing sources if possible. This may mean some preparation beforehand
- Do not be tempted to provide answers that you do not have. Reporters may try to get you to say something 'controversial'. You can always say, 'I can’t comment on that'. Always refer back to the issue at hand: 'I'm here to discuss …'
- Provide the reporter with written material and/or the names of others to contact for background material, if appropriate
- Have one or two supporters present while being interviewed (CDHCS 1999).

Responding to the media

Sometimes the media may present the issues your organisation is concerned about in a way that is wrong or negative. The group needs to have a way to monitor what the media are saying or writing. When negative stories appear, immediately contact the appropriate person (from the list previously prepared). Ask for a meeting to discuss the group's objections to the story and how the group can help the media outlet avoid presenting such negative stories in the future.

A group of three or four people from the group who are knowledgeable on the issue should attend the meeting. This process can be included in the group’s media plan.
Dealing with negative media

Sometimes sections of the media may overreact to negative stories about your community or multicultural communities generally. If you feel your community is getting unfair or alarmist media coverage take stock and meet with your key leaders. Seek help from like organisations that have greater experience dealing with the media such as your state or territory ethnic communities council or multicultural council.

In these situations ensure your spokespeople are properly trained in dealing with negative media and know how to deal with difficult questioning. Sometimes media organisations may try and be selective with the use of your quotes to portray you unfairly. Develop a specific media plan for dealing with that situation.

Remember there is no obligation to talk to the media so if you feel you are being unfairly portrayed or the questions are unreasonable, you are entitled to say, ‘no comment’.

Media releases

Groups often use media releases to bring major issues to the community’s notice, or to inform the community of an activity the group is involved in.

Media releases should be short, informative, and stand out from all the other news media outlets have to choose from. Media releases need to provide answers to six basic questions:

- Who is involved – who said or did what; to whom did it happen?
- What is going to happen or has already happened?
- When will or did the particular issue occur?
- Where will or did it occur?
- Why will or did it happen?
- How will or did it happen?

Suggestions for a media release:

- Use standard A4 paper – if the group has a letterhead, use that
- Write MEDIA RELEASE and a title for the media release at the top of the page
- Double space the text and repeat the title on every page
- Limit the media release to one or two pages (one preferably)
- Make sure that names and phone numbers of group representatives are provided
- If using more than one page, don’t split sentences or paragraphs between pages
- Ensure that the message is clear and understandable to the general community.
- Don’t use abbreviations
- Add a personal story, as long as it doesn’t detract from your main message
- Use direct quotes from people
- Be succinct when covering the issue – have no more than three key points and make them stand out
- Follow up the media release with a phone call to the reporter (CDHCS 1999).
**The print media — newspapers**

The print media is the easiest for community groups to use, especially local community newspapers which are often delivered free to every home.

For this reason, this section focuses on two ways to get material published in newspapers: through letters to the editor and by submitting articles. Many of the skills discussed below can also be applied to other print media (such as magazines). Some of the broad ideas can also be applied to radio and television.

**Letters to the editor**

All newspapers have a regular ‘Letters to the Editor’ page. This is a common method for individuals and groups to have their say on particular issues. Newspapers get hundreds of letters and have to decide which ones to publish. Sometimes a letter is changed or cut down (edited) before it is printed to fit in the space available. The important thing is that the editing should not alter the meaning of the letter. If you find that it does, you have grounds for complaint. Some newspapers consult the writer first before editing.

Your letter has a better chance of being published if it:

- Is clearly worded and understandable
- Relates to an issue that the newspaper’s readers are likely to be interested in
- Is typed or carefully handwritten
- Conforms to the style and length requested on the ‘Letters to the Editor’ page
- Responds to a current issue reported in the paper — in this case, the letter needs to be sent as soon as possible, not longer than a few days after the issue was published
- Does not contain any offensive or abusive language
- Is not only negative but offers positive alternatives.

If you desire confidentiality, you need to request this. Most newspapers require your name, full address and phone number, although only names and suburbs are generally printed.

**Submitting an article for publication**

The best way to put your view forward about an issue or respond to articles you disagree with is to offer an article of your own.

Some newspapers, especially local community ones, reserve space for these kinds of articles. Generally articles of around 500 words are accepted. There is no obligation for a newspaper to print your article. It may also be edited.

Prepare a framework for your article and list the main points. Calmly and logically state your arguments. Talk to the features editor of the paper to discuss your plans before you write the full article. They may be particularly interested if your article relates to a topical issue or offers a fresh approach. Be prepared to negotiate any changes to your article (Communications Law Centre 1995).

**Other communication resources**

**The internet**

The internet is an increasingly accessible source of information. Many community organisations have ‘home pages’ which can reach a wide audience with up to date information that may help your group.
Developing a campaign
Sometimes you may wish to organise a campaign around a single issue to bring about change. The following are some tips on how to go about it (CDHCS 1999).

Identify the players
Find out who is interested in becoming involved. Get together the individuals and groups who will actively participate in the campaign.

Identify the goals of the campaign
Consider:
- Why is the campaign needed?
- What change is required? Define and agree what outcome you are seeking. There needs to be agreement among campaign participants about these aims and goals.
- Who is your target audience?
- Who will undertake what tasks in preparing and conducting the campaign?

Gather information – research the area
Key questions to help with your research include:
- What information is needed to have the complete picture? It is really important to have a good understanding of the issues before beginning your campaign.
- Who are the key contacts? These include, for example, people who use a service that has been the subject of complaint or criticism, or has closed down. Other key contacts might be the people running the service, that is, senior administrators or members of state government departments.
- Who are possible supporters and allies? Other organisations may be able to provide information and support to help your campaign.

Identify and gather resources
Key areas to assist with planning are:
- What financial resources are needed?
- What are the possible funding sources (such as donations, fundraisers)?
- What human resources are needed? What kinds of expertise do you have within the group? Do you need to recruit people with particular expertise?
- What other resources are required? Such as equipment.

Planning strategies, tactics and activities
Major areas to address are:
- What is the time frame for the campaign? If you have a very short time to carry out your campaign, you need to consider what strategies are likely to be the most direct and effective.
- What are the possible scenarios and what are the possible responses? Do you expect to be given a hearing? If not, you need to reconsider your approach to the issue. Are you (as a group) interested in compromising on any of your ‘demands’? Are you prepared to negotiate a solution?
• What activities will you undertake and when should you escalate activity? This can depend on the response you get from your target audience. For example, if you are invited to speak with the senior management of a service you may need to put a media campaign on hold. If management is unwilling to listen to your demands, you may need to start several new activities, such as, lobbying politicians, a letter writing campaign or approaching the media.

• When will the mass media be involved? Remember that media coverage has both good and bad consequences. Think carefully about how much or how little control you will have over the way your concerns may be represented in the media.

Implement the plan
• What steps will you follow to put the plan into action?
• How will you monitor progress and developments? Good communication between those involved in the campaign is very important.

Review and evaluate
• When and how will you evaluate progress?
• How can you adjust or alter strategies, tactics and activities to respond to developments?
• How will you gather information about audience reactions and responses to the campaign to date?
• How will you use this information (feedback) to inform the campaign's future direction?

Follow up
• Keep a record of the campaign and copies of all documentation: actions taken; meetings; media items and so on.
• Maintain and further develop the contacts and networks that were formed during the campaign process.
• Make sure that any gains you made through the campaign are maintained (McAllister 1988).

Meetings
Meetings are an important way for your group to discuss issues and make decisions about its activities. For this reason it is a good idea to make sure meetings are well organised and run smoothly. The following are some tips about holding and running meetings:
• Give members of your group plenty of notice (at least seven days) of where the meeting is to be held and the agenda.
• Meetings should be held in a space that is comfortable and private. Libraries and community centres often have good meeting rooms. Always book the meeting room in advance so you know the meeting will not be interrupted.
• Prepare an agenda that sets out the items you will be discussing and circulate it with the meeting notice and the minutes of the previous meeting.
Chairing meetings
The central role of the Chair is to manage the meeting to address the tasks before it. The following are some tips for good chairing:

- Promote participation – try and make sure everyone gets a say. Facilitate rather than contribute to the meeting
- Seek a high level of group ownership of decisions.
- Organise the agenda so that important decisions are made early. Review the proposed activities from the previous meeting before adopting new topics.
- Plan and manage the time to give fair attention to each issue
- State the parameters of a discussion. 'We need to arrive at a collective position on ...'
- Clarify the discussion if it appears to be stuck.
- Deal with conflict as it arises. Summarise the facts and the issues of the discussion. Identify the areas of agreement and move on from there. Introduce a break if the exchanges are too heated.
- Understand the agreed procedural rules of the committee and use them impartially (CD-HCS 1999).

Achieving an outcome
Some committees require a vote to be taken on a motion that has been 'moved' and 'seconded'. This is a formal way of achieving an outcome. If you take this approach you may want to satisfy yourself that particular members have not been disempowered through lack of opportunity to state their case.

Less formal meetings may engage in discussions that try to ensure that everyone has had a chance to participate. As chair, you may put the motion or decision as a summary statement, such as: 'so, it seems we are all agreed that ...'

However the outcome is decided, the group is bound by it. Sometimes a group that is exhausted or not well informed about an issue may agree to something without a strong commitment. Be aware of the level of commitment to an agreement and, as an alternative, defer a vote until more commitment is achievable (CDHCS 1999).

Minute-taking
Minutes are a summary of the following facts:

- Time and date of a meeting and where it is held
- Names of all people present, and apologies for those who provided one, as well as late arrivals and early departures
- All items discussed, whether on the agenda or not
- Any actions agreed upon, and the names of the people responsible for carrying out those actions
- Date for completion of tasks and actions
- The time that the meeting concluded
- Minutes are normally taken by the secretary.
If you are taking minutes sit in a position where you will be able to hear everybody clearly. Don’t try to write down a complete record of what people say – you won’t be able to keep up. Focus on writing the facts or ideas in a way that gives you an understanding of what is said.

You may wish to discuss with the Chair the need for her/him to summarise for you and give you time to write. It is better to record too much rather than too little. If you can’t hear or understand any speaker, ask them to repeat or clarify what they say. Read what you have written so that there can be no disagreement later about its accuracy.

If somebody has a minority view and asks for that to be ‘noted in the minutes’, take down what is said and read it aloud so that all present can agree that it is what the person is saying.

Make sure that any action to be taken before the next meeting is given a 'time to be completed', and that there is no confusion about what is to be done, by whom, and by when (CDHCS 1999).

The Board section of www.ourcommunity.com contains further information about meeting procedures and best practice.

**Influencing people to support your cause**

The fundamental aim of individuals and groups engaged in advocacy activities is to influence others. Generally, three factors determine the degree to which people will be influenced:

- The characteristics of the communicator
- The characteristics of the communication
- The characteristics of the audience.

**The characteristics of the communicator**

The communicator is the source of the message. Characteristics of the communicator that relate to his or her ability to influence people may include: passion, life experiences, credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, status, and voice qualities.

Communications from a credible source have a greater influence on people than communication from a source with less credibility. For example a person from a CALD community talking about barriers to accessing appropriate health services that they have experienced personally. Communicators with relatively high levels of hesitation – (for instance, 'well, maybe, I'm not sure') are often perceived by the audience to be low in competence and persuasiveness.

People who talk confidently at a fairly moderate rate and in a clearly audible voice are generally perceived to be competent and persuasive.

**The characteristics of the communication**

Characteristics of the communication, or message, can include: empathy, level of passion, emotional appeals (anger, disappointment, fear), novelty (freshness of ideas), presentation style (dramatic, humorous), how the arguments are presented, repetition.

**One-sided versus two-sided arguments**

Any communicator has to decide whether to present one side or both sides of the argument they are discussing. If the audience is likely to be supportive of the message, then a one-sided message that does not discuss any of the counter arguments can be most effective.

If the audience is not necessarily supportive, a two-sided argument that addresses concerns or potential criticisms is better. Preparation is the key. Think of arguments that people may come up with and develop counter arguments in advance.
The audience

The characteristics of the audience that affect its ability to be influenced include: life experiences, degree of passion about the topic, intelligence, involvement, memory, expertise, personality (that is, how easily they can generally be influenced).

When trying to influence an individual or a group, you have no control over the characteristics of the audience. However, you can research the type of audience you want to try to influence and craft your message or presentation accordingly.

Lobbying politicians

Before you lobby politicians about an issue you need to identify the appropriate level of government (local, state or federal) and the government department and minister.

Information about government initiatives, ministries and the responsibilities of government departments is available on government websites, government bookshops or from public libraries.

Once you identify the right politician you can request a meeting. You can also meet with your local member. You can ask a politician to:

- Raise your concerns in the party’s decision-making forums (Cabinet, Caucus, backbench and policy committees)
- Ask questions on key issues in parliament. This puts the issue on the public record
- Provide access to government reports and other information that might not be readily accessible.

Who’s who

Ministers are responsible for a particular area of government activity. It is generally better to target ministers rather than backbenchers because they have more influence over government policy and legislation.

Ministerial staff include private secretaries, consultants, advisers and media officers. They can provide important information about what the minister, party or government agency thinks about a particular issue. They can also influence how the minister views an issue.

Backbenchers. While not as influential as ministers, backbenchers are generally more approachable, especially if they are your local member. Backbenchers may help you to get access to the parliamentary party’s decision-making forums. While direct access to these committees is limited, you can ask a member to present your case or allow you to attend to give a presentation.

Party committees. In both major parties, committees are set up to deal with some of the more important or urgent aspects of government and to advise ministers on these issues.

The opposition. While oppositions generally do not make decisions, they can be useful if the government is not supporting your position. Sometimes the opposition can pressure or embarrass the government into changing its position. If you are getting nowhere with the government, consider approaching the opposition. For instance you could ask a shadow minister to ask questions in parliament.

Public servants play an important role in the development of public policy and legislation so it is vital to include them in your lobbying strategy (PIAC 2003).
Seven tips for successful delegations

Lobbying is commonly carried out by delegations. A delegation is a group of people who represent a particular organisation or issue.

1. Choose your strategy – Meet with the people in your organisation and community first to decide the main points you want to get across and who should represent the delegation.

2. Select your delegates – Choose the most appropriate people for your delegation. The delegation should be as representative of your membership as possible. For example young people as well as mature-aged people, women as well as men. It does not need to include the office-bearers or executive members of your group.

3. The size of the delegation should be negotiated with the person or people being lobbied. It should be between three and five people. If you have too many people waiting to say something, no one gets a chance to say anything in depth.

   Summarise the main points in writing – Type out the main points so you can hand them to the politician, government agency or organisation at the end of the meeting. Make sure it has a clear heading and date to identify it. A common problem with ministerial delegations is that some members will go off the main agenda with individual concerns and confuse the meeting.

4. Delegates should meet beforehand – Make sure each person is aware of all the main points you want to get across during the meeting. Divide up the points – give specific responsibility to different people to raise different issues. Make sure you agree on who will speak first as well as who will make the concluding comments.

5. Appoint a note taker – Take notes during the delegation. It is polite to ask the people you are meeting with if you may do so. Explain that you want the notes for your own records or in order to report back accurately to your group.

6. Ask questions – Remember to ask questions and to listen. It is a good opportunity to get information as well as to give it. If you do not know the answer to a question, explain this and say you will get the information or answer to them as soon as possible.

7. Write up the results – One person should be responsible for writing a report of the meeting. It is a good idea to do this as soon as possible while the event is still fresh in your mind. Use the report to help work out your next steps. Make sure you follow up any issues that have arisen out of the delegation. It is often useful to send a ‘thank-you’ letter that also includes your understanding of what was discussed or agreed to at the meeting (PIAC, 2003: 31).
Lobbying through letter writing

Letter writing can also be an effective way to lobby. When writing letters be specific and word the letter clearly. Leave the reader in no doubt about the issue referred to, your views on the issue and how you want to see the issue resolved. The following format may be useful in planning the structure of the letter:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it important?
- What are your facts, or beliefs about the issue?
- What are your rights with respect to the issue?
- What result do you want from writing about the issue?
- What positive results will happen if you get what you want? (CDHCS 1999)

The following are some tips for lobbying through letter writing:

- Ask just one question (two at the most). Keep the letter short. Do not make speeches or offer opinions.
- Read the answer carefully. If it does not actually answer your question, write again pointing out politely that they have not answered the question. Repeat the question and ask for an answer. Repeat this process as often as necessary.
- If you get an answer, write asking another question and repeat the above process.
- Remain polite and keep letters brief. Remember, repeated refusal to answer a simple question carries its own story.
- Keep copies of all letters: yours and theirs (Burnside Undated).

Politicians' addresses can be found at parliamentary websites. For example: Commonwealth House of Representatives: www.aph.gov.au.

Lobbying by phone

You can also lobby by phone. To do this it is essential that you know the name, title and phone number of the person who has the power to make the decision. You should also know whether you can talk to this person on the phone or if you need to make an appointment.

Be prepared – Make sure the room you are using is quiet and free from distractions. You should be prepared to take notes. When you prepare, write down a list of things that you would like to talk about and refer to it during the conversation.

When calling – Speak slowly and clearly and introduce yourself. You might like to say who you are representing if you are representing a group or an organisation. You should provide a brief explanation about what you would like to discuss – just include the important details. If you are not sure about something, ask the person to explain, or to repeat something.

Take your time when answering questions or talking about your issues. At the end of the call, thank the person for their time and effort and check what will happen after the phone call. Ask when you can expect to hear back from the person and if there is anything else you can do to have your issue heard.

After the conversation – Record important things that were said in the conversation, what was agreed to, and what will happen after the conversation. Note down the time and date. Make sure you complete any tasks that you are required to. Call back if you have not heard from the person in the time they said they would get back to you.

If the person is not there when you call – Ask when would be a good time to call back. Or, request that they call you back. Make sure that you leave your full name, contact details and a time when you will be available for the person to return your call (Bouloukos 2002).
**Step-by-step process for getting your issues heard**

If you have an issue or a problem that you would like resolved follow the steps below:

### Step 1: What happened?

When did the situation happen?
- Date:
- Time:
- Place:
- Other details:

Who did you talk to?
- Name:
- Position:
- Organisation/department/business:

What reasons were used for not giving you what you asked for?

Was the refusal based on a particular law or policy? YES/NO

What was it? Be exact

What will happen if the situation is not resolved right away?

What do you want to happen in this situation?

### Step 2: Looking for Alternatives

If you are not satisfied with the first step, what other ways can you get your issues heard?

It is important to write down everything you have tried or would like to try.

Are there other ways to find what you are asking for? YES/NO

Can you get this particular thing or service somewhere else? YES/NO

Could you make do with something else? YES/NO

Is there some other approach that would be satisfactory?

Make a list of what you did to find alternative solutions to this situation. Be specific.

What were the names of the people you talked to?
- When did you talk to them?
- What agencies/organisations did you approach?
- What results did you get?

### Step 3: Finding Out Your Rights and Entitlements

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you might like to find out your specific rights on the issue. You can contact an Ethnic Communities Council in your state/territory, to help you find a solution.

What do the laws and policies say about your rights or entitlements in this situation? Be specific.

Is there an administrative review (a body/organisation that is established to review specific complaints on your issue), or appeal process (a law or policy that allows you to appeal your circumstances)? YES/NO
Is there a complaint line?  YES/NO

- Who would know?
- What does the agency/organisation you consulted say about your chances for success in this situation?
- Would it be worthwhile to get another opinion?
- YES, because:
- NO, because:

Will your local MP intercede on your behalf?  YES/NO

(Bouloukos 2002) (PAN 1997)

Gaining support and fundraising

Any group needs money to operate and develop effectively. Some groups can get by with very little, while large groups may rely on annual grants of $50,000 or more.

The first step is to understand the group’s long-term goals and what resources it will need. Groups might consider obtaining support in the form of office space, a place for meetings and donations of computers, videos, office furniture or fax machines. Material support can be very useful for a new group when all you have is a group of people with some good ideas.

Support can also be available from people offering their time and skills. Facilitators may assist groups to develop their mission statement and guest speakers may be happy to offer ‘in kind’ support. The group can access such people by writing or telephoning them and asking for their assistance (CDHCS 1999).

Potential funding sources

Potential funding sources include commonwealth, state and local government departments. Information about funding can be obtained by telephoning the government departments that are related to the needs of the group. Choose the agencies you contact carefully to make sure they are relevant to your group and its goals. Some examples of agencies are:

Commonwealth government: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC); Department of Health and Ageing; Department of Employment, Education, Science and Training; Department of Veterans Affairs.

State government: State Offices of Multicultural Affairs; Multicultural Commissions; Departments of Health (and other bodies such as VicHealth in Victoria); Departments such as Family Services; Housing; Education; Community Services, and Training.

Local government (councils): Community Services; Community Arts funding.

Some examples of grants programs from various government departments include:

- Diverse Australia Grants (DIAC)
- Volunteer Small Equipment Grants, through the Commonwealth Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Education and Training Programs
- Community Housing Programs
- Health Promotion Grants
- Community Development Assistance Grants (local councils).
You can also subscribe to publications like the ‘Easy Grants Newsletter’. This is a regular newsletter providing information about grants offered by state and commonwealth governments as well as philanthropic and corporate grants. You will need to pay a fee to subscribe to this service. To find out more go to www.ourcommunity.com.au, email service@ourcommunity.com.au, or phone (03) 9320 6800.

The website www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spgrants.htm provides information about selected sources of commonwealth, state and territory financial assistance to community groups. It also lists non-government organisations providing community grants and commercial services that provide information about grants.

Philanthropic Trusts
A philanthropic trust is set up by people or organisations to provide funding to those who fulfil the strict guidelines required by the trust. A number of organisations are now obliged by government licensing bodies to return a percentage of their profits to the community. Major examples of these include casinos and cigarette companies, but many large companies also have such trusts. Some examples are:

- Casino Community Benefit Funds
- Gaming Machine Community Benefit Funds
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Myer Foundation.


Corporate funding and/or support
Many small groups obtain substantial support from large businesses, as well as from small local businesses. Sometimes all it takes is being confident enough to approach these businesses through their public relations manager or other appropriate person.

Local photocopying and printing businesses can be approached for good deals or at-cost services. Ask around the members of the group to see what connections they have.

Service Clubs
Many groups have received invaluable support from service clubs such as Rotary, Apex and Lions. Most of these clubs are set up for the specific purpose of raising money to donate to worthy community groups. If the group sends a speaker to address a particular service club, this may motivate the club to raise money for the group (CDHCS 1999).

Applying for financial support
If you decide to apply for a grant or other funding to manage a project or a service, there are a number of things to think about. Does your organisation have the ability to carry through on the requirements of a grant application such as proper financial and bookkeeping processes? Does it have a suitable structure, credibility, experience, and the right people? Is the proposal consistent with what the organisation does currently and (where relevant) its constitution?

You should also consider whether the group’s submission has support from other organisations or influential people.
Tips for attracting potential funding and support sources
The following are four tips on how to increase opportunities to obtain funding:

1. **Establish your image.** Know what the group is about and communicate this. Both you and the funding bodies have to be confident about your stability and purpose as a community group.

2. **Thoroughly develop your idea for funding.** The group needs to plan the process of obtaining funding and decide on a clear plan of action.

3. **Get comments and support.** Contact other groups and organisations that have previously been down the funding track: they will have advice (and stories of failure). Develop a list of likely and appropriate funding sources and approach a representative of each source. Discuss your ideas with them and note their advice. It is also important to ensure your grant application is presented professionally and matches the program funding guidelines.

4. **Match the ideas of the group to the funding available.** If the group has very strict ideas about the work for which it will request funding, then opportunities are limited. The group can change their ideas, but funding sources do not change their guidelines. Often it comes down to words and the meaning placed on words. For example, a funding agency may refuse to give funding for 'advocacy', but may give grants for 'community development'. When this occurs, modify your terminology to match that of the funding agency. It is what you intend to do with the money that is important, not the words that people may choose to describe the work (QCOSS 1997).

Other options for gaining funding and support
If your group relies on funding from another organisation, one issue is how the group will actually receive money. You may need to open a bank account. Banks require a lot of details about the group and the people who will access the account. You will also need to work out which people from the group will manage the money.

Funding organisations require detailed accounts to be kept of where and how the money is spent. Financial statements need to be supplied to the funding body on a regular basis. This can place a lot of stress on people in the group and take up a lot of time and energy.

A way to get around these problems is to arrange for an organisation that is incorporated, and has an accounting system that is audited annually, to auspice your group. For a small fee, such an organisation will bank the money your group receives, monitor its spending and prepare monthly financial reports for the group and for the funding organisation. In this way the auspicer is responsible for taking care of the funds and ensuring they are spent appropriately.

Your group still has control over how the money is spent, as long as it is spent in accordance with the budget that the group submitted to the funding organisation.

Any organisation that is incorporated can be an auspicer. For example: community centres, neighbourhood centres, church organisations, and consumer organisations (CDHCS 1999).

Problems associated with external funding
Once a group starts receiving funding a potential problem of ‘conflict of interest’ can arise if certain demands imposed by the funding body conflict with the values of the group. Groups that do not address these issues run the risk of losing touch with their guiding principles and their reason for existence.
Groups should still have the freedom to remain independent and express views that might challenge decisions that the funding body makes. It is also important to maintain a positive relationship with them. Some tips for doing this are:

- Be up-front with the agency from the outset – explain this is where the organisation can be flexible, this is where it cannot. You are much more likely to be treated with respect if you are frank from the start.
- Work in partnership with the funding agency about the overall aims of the group and how the funding will be used.
- Listen to their advice and opinions. Use their technical and process knowledge and skills – but apply these to suit the group's goals and principles.
- Communicate the successes of the group to the funding agency so that it understands that the money will be well used.
- Once you have been successful in attracting funding, it is important that you are accountable for the way in which you spend the funds.

**Building strategic networks**

If you are advocating for change, there may be many benefits in working with other organisations involved in similar activities. Contact similar groups and organisations to discuss your ideas. Not all organisations will want to link with you. However, through networking, contacts can be formed with other groups that may be interested.

Follow this process through and meet with representatives of these organisations to discuss the group's plans and possible links with existing groups.

**Collaboration between groups**

To be more effective, many groups collaborate with other groups either in a general way, or on specific projects. These are sometimes called alliances. An alliance may form because of a particular situation where various groups want to present a united front on matters affecting people from CALD communities.

**Developing community partnerships**

Community partnerships are a more formal way of linking your group with another group. A partnership may help you to obtain funding or run projects or other activities, or gain access to facilities.

Community partnerships may begin with a meeting between members of the group and another community agency (for example, the local community centre). At this meeting the group needs to state clearly and succinctly the reasons why it wants to establish a relationship with the agency and the proposed outcomes and benefits for both parties.

In developing links with the broader community, the group needs to be in a position to offer something to the other agency, as well as to expect assistance in return. This is the essence of community partnerships. The community agency will want to feel confident that the group understands, or is willing to understand, its issues, resources, structures and problems (CDHCS 1999).
Taking care of yourself
Being an advocate can be a demanding role. When people first become involved as advocates it can be exciting and fulfilling. But it can also become overwhelming.
Recognise that you may not always achieve the outcome you want, despite your best efforts. This is part of the process. Not succeeding is an opportunity to learn from the situation and to develop new skills.
Advocacy needs to include the knowledge that change will come in time. It may be useful to adopt an attitude of patience (CDHCS 1999).
Perhaps the most important thing is learning how to take care of yourself so that you do not burn out. Here are some suggestions:
- Maintain links with friends and family who are not involved in advocacy issues
- Eat well ensure that your diet is nutritious and that you eat even when you do not feel like eating stress can reduce appetite
- Ensure that you have sufficient rest and sleep
- Ensure that you exercise
- Take up a hobby and pursue it regularly
- Obtain emotional support from people you respect and trust
- Take time out occasionally – be self indulgent
- Understand that despite all your advocacy work, there will always be issues to deal with and that you are not responsible for resolving all these issues – understand your own limits (CDHCS 1999).

Peer support
Conducting advocacy can be demanding and stressful. Obtain support from other advocates, community leaders, or organisations undertaking similar work.

Clarity about your role
Advocates and community leaders, in whatever capacity they are working, whether paid or unpaid, are entitled to clear information about their role.
If you have been invited to sit on a committee, you need to be fully informed about the purpose, powers and responsibilities of that committee. You are entitled to receive relevant information in plenty of time before meetings so you have time to consider the topics for discussion.
If you are taking up a staff position within services or commencing work as a volunteer, you are entitled to a full and clear job description and information about your rights and responsibilities.
Threats
Sometimes there may be situations that involve threats or risks to members of your community that require immediate action. These might include acts of violence, discrimination, or racial hatred. Any person who has experienced violence or racial hatred should contact the police immediately. Violence can sometimes occur because of tensions between groups with different faiths or cultural backgrounds. If this is happening in your community, you might consider meeting with members of other faith groups or communities to discuss it. Your group may wish to participate in the annual Harmony Day or organise a special multifaith gathering. A multifaith gathering is a powerful symbolic act of religious and cultural tolerance. See: Guidelines for Multifaith Gatherings for more information about how to organise such an event.

Keeping your community together
Many migrant and refugee communities face challenges in areas such as settlement, social inclusion, employment, education, English language training, health, housing and discrimination. Tackling these issues and helping members of your community will be a big part of your advocacy activities.

Ensuring members of your community are connected to each other and to the services and other community activities that are available is an important part of empowering them. Regular newsletters and meetings are some of the things discussed in this part of the kit that will help you to do this.

Learnings
You should now have an understanding of how to:
- Communicate effectively
- Promote your message including developing a newsletter and working with the media
- Hold meetings and develop a campaign
- Influence people and lobby politicians
- Gain funding
- Develop strategic networks
- Look after yourself and keep your community together.
Part 4 – Where to get more information

This section contains a list of organisations, resources and links to websites that you may find useful in setting up your organisation, undertaking new projects or simply to gain familiarity with other similar organisations.

You can also find links and other useful information on the FECCA website: www.fecca.org.au.

**Ethnic and Multicultural Communities Councils**
As well as the National Federation (FECCA) there are Ethnic and Multicultural Community Councils in every state around Australia. These councils represent and advocate for ethnic communities in your state or territory.

**Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia**
PO Box 344
Curtin ACT 2605
Phone: (02) 6282 5755    Fax: (02) 6282 5734
Email: admin@fecca.org.au  Website: www.fecca.org.au

**Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria**
150 Palmerston St
Carlton Vic 3053
Phone: (03) 9349 4122    Fax: (03) 9349 4967
Email: eccv@eccv.org.au  Website: www.eccv.org.au

**Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW**
221 Cope Street
Waterloo NSW 2017
Phone: (02) 9319 0288    Fax: (02) 9319 4229
Email: admin@eccnsw.org.au  Website: www.eccnsw.org.au

**ACT Multicultural Council**
GPO Box 394
Civic ACT 2608
Phone: (02) 6291 9383    Fax: (02) 6291 9885
Website: www.actmc.org.au

**Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory**
PO Box 299
Sanderson NT 0813
Phone: (08) 8945 9122    Fax: (08) 8945 9155
Email: admin@mcnt.org.au  Website: www.mcnt.org.au
Ethnic Communities’ Council of Queensland
253 Boundary Road
West End Qld 4101
Phone: (07) 3844 9166       Fax: (07) 3846 4453
Email: administration@eccq.com.au       Website: www.eccq.com.au

Multicultural Council of South Australia
113 Gilbert Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8410 0300       Fax: (08) 8410 0311
Email: mccsa@mccsa.org.au       Website: www.multiwebsa.org.au

Ethnic Communities’ Council of Western Australia
20 View Street
North Perth WA 6005
Phone: (08)9227 5322       Fax: (08)9227 5460
Email: eccwa@iinet.net.au       Website: www.eccwa.multicultural.vze.com/

Other useful organisations

Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Level 9, 299 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 8898 6500       Fax: (02) 8898 6555
Email: piac@piac.asn.au       Website: www.piac.asn.au

Aged Care Rights Service
Level 4, 418A Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9281 3600       Fax: (02) 9281 3672       County callers: 1800 424 079

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre
Level 5, 362 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 9299 8467

Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Level 8 Suite 8C, 46-56 Kippax St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9211 4001       Email: admin@racs.org.au       Web:www.racs.org.au

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
40 Albion Street
Harris Park NSW 2150
Phone: (02)9687 8933       Fax: (02)9635 5355       TTY: (02)9687 6325
Email: office@nedag.org.au       Web: www.neda.org.au
Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Migrant Service Agencies (MSAs)

Many MRCs and MSAs receive Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) grants for specific settlement services. They may also receive funding from other sources including government departments.

ACT  Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services (MARSS) ACT  (02) 6248 8577  www.mrccanberra.org.au

NSW  Auburn Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9649 6955  www.amrc.org.au
      Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9687 9901  www.bhhpmrc.org.au
      Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9621 6633  www.blacktownmrc.org.au
      Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9727 0477  www.fmrc.net
      Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9789-3744  www.cbmrcc.org.au
      Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9601 3788  www.lmrc.org.au
      Macarthur Diversity Services Inc (02) 4627 1188  www.mdsi.org.au
      Migrant Network Services (Northern Sydney) (02) 9987 2333  www.mnsnorth.org
      Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and Hunter Region (02) 4969 3399
      1800 813 205 (free call)  www.mrcnh.org
      St George Migrant Resource Centre (02) 9597 5455  www.sgmrc.org.au

QLD  Access Services Inc (07) 3412 8222  www.accessservicesinc.org.au
      Migrant Resource Centre of Townsville –Thuringowe (07) 4772 4800  www.townsville-mrc.org
      Migrant Settlement Services (07) 4041 7699  www.migrantservices.org
      Multicultural Development Association (07) 3337 5400  www.mdainc.org.au

SA  Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (08) 8217 9500  www.users.bigpond.com/mrcsa

TAS  Migrant Resource Centre of Northern Tasmania (03) 6331 2300  www.mrcltn.org.au
      Migrant Resource Centre of Southern Tasmania (03) 6221 0999  www.mrchobart.org.au

VIC  Diversitat (03) 5221 6044  www.diversitat.org.au/contactus.htm
      Gippsland Multicultural Services Inc (03) 5133 7072  www.gmsinfo.com.au
      Migrant Resource Centre North West Region (03) 9367 6044  www.mrcnorthwest.org.au
      Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Melbourne) (03) 9384 7900  www.spectrumvic.org.au
      Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) (03) 9285 4888  www.miceastmelb.com.au
      New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre (formerly South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre)  (03) 9510 5877  www.nhf.org.au
      South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (03) 9706 8933  www.sermrc.org.au
      The Migrant Resource Centre Westgate Region (03) 9391 3355  www.wmrc.org.au

WA  Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre Inc. (08) 9345 5755  www.mmrcwa.org.au
Torture Trauma Rehabilitation Services

Torture Trauma Rehabilitation Services can assist people from a refugee and migrant background who have experienced torture or been traumatised as a result of persecution, violence, war or unlawful imprisonment prior to arrival in Australia. Some services also provide early health assessment and intervention services.

VIC  Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (03) 9388 0022  www.survivorsvic.org.au

NSW  Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors
(02) 9794 1900  www.startts.org.au

QLD  Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (07) 3391 6677
www.qpastt.org.au

SA  Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (08) 8346 5433
www.sttars.org.au

WA  Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (08) 9277 2700
www.asettts.org.au

ACT  ACT Companion House (02) 6247 7227 www.companionhouse.org.au

TAS  Phoenix Support Service for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (03) 6234 9330

NT  Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the Northern Territory (08) 8985 3311

National multicultural organisations

Australian Multicultural Foundation (03) 9347 6622  www.amf.net.au

Multicultural Mental Health Australia (02) 9840 3333  www.mmha.org.au

Chain Reaction Foundation Ltd (02) 9953 3287  chainreaction.org.au

Centre for Multicultural Youth (03) 9340 3700  www.cmyi.net.au

Refugee advocacy, human rights advocacy organisations

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (03) 9480 1666  1800 626 078 (toll free)
www.adec.org.au

Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (02) 9891 6400  1800 629 072 (toll free)
www.mdaaa.org.au

Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (08) 9388 7455  www.edac.org.au
### Social services advocacy organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Australian Council of Social Service</td>
<td>(02) 9310 6200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.acoss.org.au">www.acoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australian Council for Social Services</td>
<td>(08) 8305 4222</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sacoss.org.au">www.sacoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Council of Social Service of New South Wales</td>
<td>(02) 9211 2599</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncoss.org.au">www.ncoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Victorian Council of Social Service</td>
<td>(03) 9654 5050 or 1800 133 340 (free call)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vcoss.org.au">www.vcoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Queensland Council of Social Service</td>
<td>(07) 3004 6900 or 1800 651 255 (free call)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.qcoss.org.au">www.qcoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc</td>
<td>(03) 6231 0755</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tascoss.org.au">www.tascoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>ACT Council Of Social Service</td>
<td>(02) 6202 7200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.actcoss.org.au">www.actcoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australian Council of Social Service</td>
<td>(08) 9420 7222 or 1300 658 816</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wacoss.org.au">www.wacoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory Council of Social Service</td>
<td>(08) 8948 2665</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ntcoss.org.au">www.ntcoss.org.au</a></td>
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### Government, judicial and related organisations

- **Australian Human Rights Commission**  (02) 9284 9600 www.hreoc.gov.au
- **Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau** (03) 9603 8341 www.apmab.gov.au  
  *See website for State contact details*
- **Family Court**  1300 352 000 www.familycourt.gov.au
- **Migration Agents Registration Authority** (02) 9299 5446 www.themara.com.au
- **The Department of Immigration and Citizenship**  131 881 www.immi.gov.au

### State and Territory Ethnic Affairs Commissions or equivalents

Statutory bodies or government agencies appointed by state governments to increase awareness and understanding of ethnic diversity and to advise governments about multicultural issues and ethnic affairs.

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<th>Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW</td>
<td>(02) 8255 6767</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cnrnsw.gov.au">www.cnrnsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Multicultural Affairs Queensland</td>
<td>13 13 04 / TIS 131 450 <a href="http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au">www.multicultural.qld.gov.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Multicultural SA</td>
<td>(08) 8226 1944 1800 063 535 (toll free) <a href="http://www.multicultural.sa.gov.au">www.multicultural.sa.gov.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Interests - Western Australia</td>
<td>(08) 9222 8800 <a href="http://www.omi.wa.gov.au">www.omi.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td></td>
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Relevant international agencies

**International Organization for Migration** *(works with migrants and governments to provide humane responses to migration challenges)* www.iom.int

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**  www.unhcr.org.au


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**International Treaties, Declarations and Covenants**

- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity  
  http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees  
- United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  
  http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
  http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child  
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  

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**Other Useful Documents**

**The Advocates’ Help Kit** developed by the Refugee Council of Australia. There are NSW and Victorian versions available on their website:  

A guide to the role of police in Australia – a document produced by the Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau:  
Glossary of terms

**Advocacy:** promoting and/or supporting a cause.

**Advocate:** a person who actively supports another person’s cause.

**Auspice:** the organisation or way through which a project or program is carried out.

**Bureaucracy:** officials who work within government.

**Chairperson/chair:** a person who heads a committee (or similar formal group), and is responsible for ensuring that meetings are orderly and topics listed for discussion are addressed.

**Community development:** a range of activities that promote a whole-of-community approach, with empowerment and social justice as key principles.

**Confidentiality:** privacy of certain information and how information is stored and used.

**Empowerment:** used to how an individual experiences the world, his/her position in it and his/her ability to undertake certain things. No one can ‘empower’ another person, but individuals, institutions, systems, social traditions and practices can disempower people. When an individual is empowered, they feel able to make decisions about their life.

**Equity:** a principle about ensuring relative fairness. Advocacy activity is often aimed at ensuring that equity is established and maintained.

**Group advocacy:** the activity undertaken by more than one person to represent the needs/rights of his/her peers.

**Incorporation:** the legal process of turning a group or organisation into a legal corporation.

**Justice:** a principle about deciding the fairness of actions. Advocacy action is often aimed at ensuring that justice prevails.

**Leader:** a person who rules, guides or inspires others; head.

**Lobbying:** representing particular interests to others to influence an outcome.

**Non-government organisation (NGO):** includes charitable and other non-profit organisations not directly answerable to any government department, although some are wholly or partly funded by government.

**Proactive:** carry out activities, put forward ideas in order to set the agenda.

**Reactive:** carry out activities, put forward ideas as a response to an agenda set by someone else.

**Representativeness:** the ability to reflect the views and concerns of one’s constituency.

**Self advocacy:** people speaking out for themselves.

**Systems advocacy:** advocacy activities designed to bring about system-wide changes rather than changes to the circumstances of an individual.

**Workshop:** seminar, instruction session; educational gathering; discussion group (CDHCS 1999).
References


Bouloukos, L, 2002, Be fearless! A guide to getting your voice heard by the community, your government representatives and government departments, Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, Brisbane.


Commonwealth Department of Health and Community Services, National Mental health branch (CDHCS), 1999, The Kit – A guide to the advocacy we choose to do. A resource kit for consumers of mental health services and family carers, CDHCS, Canberra.


Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV), 2007, Australia Africa Democracy Project, ECCV, Melbourne.


Meagher J, 1995, Partnership or Pretence: A Handbook of Empowerment and Self Advocacy for Consumers, Users and Survivors of Psychiatric Services, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, Strawberry Hills NSW.


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